

REMARKS

The Applicants have carefully considered the Official Action mailed on September 22, 2003, and in view of the arguments presented by the Examiner, the pending claims have been substantially amended. As now presented, the Applicants believe that Claims 18 and 20-29 are all in condition for allowance.

The Applicants have noted, with appreciation, that Claims 26-29 are allowed. In addition, Claim 19 was found to be allowable if rewritten in independent form. As a result, Claim 18, the sole claim upon which Claim 19 depended, has been amended to incorporate all of the limitations originally found in Claim 19. As a result, the Applicants believe that Claim 18, as now amended, is also in condition for allowance.

Finally, independent Claim 20 has been amended to more specifically define and precisely detail the preferred method for mass producing synthetic closures. In addition to the steps previously defined in Claim 20, a new process step has been added which details "cutting the interconnected, foam products into separate, individual products by employing cutting tools incorporated between each pair of adjacent, mating casting members." This cutting step is fully detailed in Applicants' original disclosure at page 27, line 16, through page 28 line 9, and shown in FIGURES 8 and 10.

Claim 20, as originally presented, was rejected based upon the teaching found in Sola. However, there is clearly no teaching or suggestion in Sola, or in any other cited prior art reference, of any cutting step. There can be no question that the method now

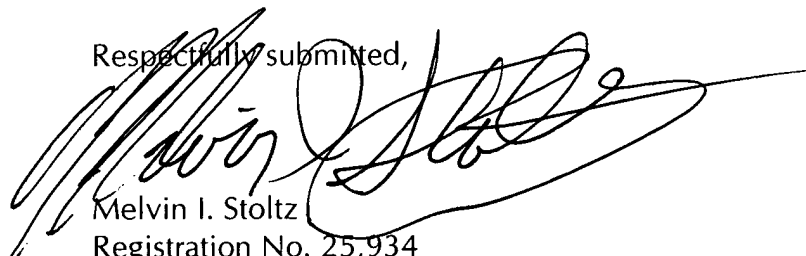
defined in Claim 20 is unique and patentable over the cited references, since no prior art reference leads one of ordinary skill in the art to any method wherein automated cutting or separating of the product is employed as an integral part of the process. With this specific, unique, and patently distinct method step incorporated into Claim 20, the Applicants believe that Claim 20 is now in condition for allowance.

Claims 21-25 are all dependent upon Claim 20 and novel combinations thereto. For this reason, as well as the reasons detailed above in reference to Claim 20, the Applicants believe that these dependent claims are also in condition for allowance.

Based upon the foregoing Amendment and the arguments presented herein, the Applicants believe that Claims 18 and 20-29 are all in condition for allowance and an early notice of allowable is earnestly solicited.

If any questions remain which may be resolved by a telephone interview, Applicants undersigned Attorney would gladly discuss such issues with the Examiner at the Examiner's convenience. For this reason, Applicants' Attorney has provided his telephone number below.

Respectfully submitted,



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